

**never let them touch you.**

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# never let them touch you.

by [girlkillsgod](#)

## Summary

he kept that knowledge close to his heart —— the same place where his name, his real name (*it's not arkady. it's not eryk. it's not iosef. it's not anton. it's not stasik. it's not kirill. it's not any of them. it's aleksander. his name is aleksander. aleksander morozova with darkness in his soul but not in his heart. aleksander morozova who is ravkan but shu and kerch and fjerdan. he is aleksander morozova, son of baghra morozova. he is aleksander morozova and he is grisha. he is aleksander.*) was kept safe, too safe that it's almost forgotten.

## Notes

character study (?) of the effects of the events in the demon of the woods to the darkling even centuries later.

trigger warnings included but not limited to : mentions of attempted murder, murder, burning, drowning, blood, nightmares, nausea, child death. basically just your typical darkling warnings.

*never let them touch you.*

*never let them touch you.*

a single touch, fleeting and grasping and light and tight and all things in between, they were enough to make him a prize to be hunted, to be kept in a cage until the rest of the grisha decided amongst themselves on who would be granted the immense power his bones could bring. a child, a boy, but not a fool. he cannot blame them for such desperation towards possible amplifiers, for their people were hunted —— **are being hunted** just for the sole reason of their existence. a basic amplifier could level down mountains but if it came from someone such as he, with powers beyond anyone's imaginations ; his bones could let them create an irreversible rip in the very fabric of reality. madraya made sure that he knew that, grisha children do not get fairytales before bed, they get warnings based on the tales of nearby camps.

grisha children are not raised with dreams. they are raised with **nightmares**.

*never let them touch you.*

a mantra etched into his mind and body and soul, but not his heart ; because if it were, he wouldn't have offered his hand to annika, he wouldn't have let himself hope that he could find a place to belong with ulle's camp even if only through the winter, he wouldn't have dared to think of spending lunch and dinner in the company of sylvi and annika as they talked about their favourite foods ( *sweets, it has always been sweets* —— the cake they served in kerch that was thick with cherries and served with cream, the candies in shu coated in sesame that he could eat by the handful ), their favourite colour ( deep blue like the true sea, red like the roofs of the shu temples, *the pure buttery colour of sunlight* —— *not really yellow or gold but simply all the colours he couldn't see in the dark* ), laughing all the while as lev glared at them from the other side of the camp, he wouldn't have been foolish enough to think that he could be just a normal grisha child.

*but he was a fool.*

*a child, a boy, a fool.*

he let annika hold his hand, he let another grisha to feel the never-ending surge of power that flows beneath his veins ; he let her touch him and he was stupid enough to hope that she would be his friend just for him. that's why he has no one else to blame but himself as annika stepped closer to him, his feet slipping against the slippery surface of the frozen pond — quiet crackling noises as the ice beneath his feet struggled to hold the weight of a boy with fear in his veins and panic in his ears.

“what are you doing?” no response, just a determined face of a grisha desperate to survive in a world full of otkazat’sya who wanted to burn them at stakes, he tried again, “annika?”

“I’m sorry.” both of their teeth beginning to chatter as the gust of frost from up north slammed against them, but neither fell nor did they stop the dance of a predator and its prey. “i need an amplifier.”

“annika——”

“the elders would never let me hunt one. they’d give it to powerful grisha like lev or his father.”

“annika, you have to listen to me——”

“my father can’t protect us.”

desperation began to seep through his bones, but underneath it all began the croon of the darkness inside of him ; begging to be released, to be allowed to **cut**. “i can protect you, you and sylvi. we’re friends, annika, i—i can protect you.”

“we’re lucky they even let us stay here.” and when her head shook, her steps became more determined ; something in him broke and despite knowing the answer, he still asked——  
*begged* , “what are you doing, annika?”

“yes. what are you doing, annika?”

his head turned and he could see lev just standing on the far shore.

“go away!” she shouted.

“that little freak and i have unfinished business. so do you and i, for that matter, annika. so what are you doing?”

“go back to the camp, lev.”

“ . . . are you giving me orders?” was lev’s bewildered response, torn between indignant fury and bewilderment but annika seemed to not hear him as she moved further into the ice to come nearer — each step allowed for the breaking of frost beneath to echo in the space otherwise occupied only by their heavy breathing.

she was right : she wasn’t strong. she was unable to freeze the ice through.

it was then he decided, the shadows in his blood —— of morozova and his merzost, of baghra and her shadows, of aleksander and his darkness, began to **sing**. “do it, annika. if i’m going to die, i don’t want lev using my power.”

“what are you talking about?” said lev, putting a tentative foot on the icy surface.

“eryk, be quiet——”

“i’m an amplifier. and once annika wears my bones, you won’t be able to push her and sylvi around anymore.”

“**shut up!**” she screamed and lev understood, for the next moment he started sprinting across the ice that started cracking under his bulk. *come on, lev. closer, come closer*, the music in his bones sang louder only to be halted as annika stopped in front of him —— face of a child, eyes of a survivor, but with tears streaming down her cheeks.

“i’m sorry,” she sobbed. “i’m so sorry, eryk.” she was crying as she brought the rock down his head.

pain exploded over his right temple, vision blurring as dark spots danced before his eyes. *do not give up, do not let them win. you are a morozova, you do not give up, you do not lose even to death, you win.* head shook from side to side furiously despite the tidal wave of pain that arrived with it. a moment of clarity made him see annika lifting the rock again. it was wet with his blood.

*never let them touch you* ——

a gust of wind struck her, sending her to slide back over the ice with a wail, “no! **he’s mine!**”

no longer a boy, merely a prize.

lev was pounding over the ice, knife in hand. he already knew his power would belong to whomever made the killing blow. that was the way amplifiers worked. *never let them touch you, because one touch was enough to reveal it, the gift lurking inside of him, enough to make him less of a boy than a prize.*

annika was lifting the rock gain and he knew, that this would be the strike that would break his skull open. he was certain of it in the way he was certain that the sun would break through the darkness in a couple of hours, just like it always does. he was certain of it in the way he was certain that once this was over, he would be **nothing but the bones around someone’s neck.**

he can’t let that happen.

***he won’t let that happen.***

he concentrated on lev’s boots, the spiderwebs of cracks beginning to spread in front of them. legs began to stretch, only to bring his knees to slam against the ice —— *nothing*, despite the panic and nausea, he did it again with his knees hitting the surface with a painful crunch. the

ice around them ruptured, then annika was toppling, collapsing into the water as the stone slipped from her hands.

eryk—— **aleksander** wrenched his arm free and plunged himself beneath the surface. under the water, he could see nothing but darkness, dissimilar to the one that makes his very being, dissimilar to the one that made his mother beautiful and feared ; this kind of darkness only meant one thing and that was **death** ( it was that moment that he realised it was better to be feared than to be loved. ). he kicked hard, not knowing which direction he was going, just that he had to make it to the shore before annika could freeze the pond again. his feet touched the bottom, and he half swam, half dragged himself to the shore when a hand closed around his ankle.

she was on top of him, using her weight to hold him down. he screamed, thrashing in her arms. then lev was there, shoving her aside, grabbing a handful of his shirt and lifting the knife. everyone was shouting. eryk—— **ALEKSANDER** was no longer sure who had hold of him. a knee pressed into his chest, head forcefully shoved into the frigid pond, allowing water to flood up his nose and into his lungs.

*i'm going to die here and they will wear my bones around their neck and i will be forgotten.*

in the eerie, muffled silence of the water, he heard his mother's voice, vicious like a whip cracking through the loud ringing in his ears. she was always asking more of him, demanding it, and now she was telling him to fight. she spoke his true name, the only one she used whenever they train, the name tattooed in his heart. *a heart that had not stopped beating. a heart that still had life.*

*remember that i love you, aleksander. know that i love you and that is enough for us.*

with the last bit of his strength, he tore his arm free and lashed out blindly, furiously. with all his terror and rage, with all the hopes and dreams that had been born and died this day. **LET ME MAKE A MARK IN THIS WORLD BEFORE I LEAVE IT.**

the weight on his chest was gone, he struggled to sit up —— choking and gasping with water spilling from his mouth. he coughed and heaved, before managing to draw a painful breath. then he looked around.

lev floated face down beside him, dark blood trickling from the deep diagonal slash that ran from his hip almost straight through his chest. his shirt was torn, and it floated backwards in the water, revealing pale skin that glowed even lighter under the moon. annika was on his other side, sprawled in the shallows, her eyes wide and panicked. a deep gash ran from her shoulder through the side of her throat that she was holding a hand to, an attempt to stop the flow of her blood.

“help me. please, eryk.”

“**that's not my name.**” he did not move, he did not look away, he simply watched as her hand dropped, eyes turning glassy as they drifted to look but not look on the surface of the moon in all her glory. the camp would blame him for this, no matter what was the truth, they would blame him —— putting him and his mother to death, their bones given to ulle or some

other grisha of power. unless he could give them something else to hate, that means he needed a better wound, ***a killing wound.***

he'd lost a lot of blood. he might not survive it, but he knew it was what he needed to do. **ALEKSANDER** waited until the sky had begun to lighten — the pure buttery colour of sunlight that was not really yellow or gold but simply all the colours he couldn't see in the dark, only then did he summon the shadows and from then drew a dark blade.

something in him broke that night, and while he was stitched back together by the grisha in the camp, by his madraya's all—too knowing eyes that had seen so much and was the only one to ever understand him even in silence, he was never quite the same after that. the name he kept locked in his heart had been forgotten for what use are names when he can have titles instead? that's what he kept telling himself even as centuries had come and gone, he still wakes abruptly with sweat — cold, so cold, always cold, sticking to his skin, the whisper of a plea to a name that wasn't truly his but became a part of him echoing in the chambers of opulence he had in the capital. a far cry from the tent that smelled of fat, of dreams, **of nightmares.**

he wouldn't have been able to return to slumber if it weren't for the arm casually slung across his torso, strands of platinum hair haphazardly strewn across the dark covers of his — *their bed*. this is his world now, there is no sylvi to be curious of him, there is no annika who would try to drown him, there is no lev who would try to stab him. there is only him and alina. so he went back to sleep and this time, he did not dream.

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